

What is a Pediatric Gastroenterologist?

If your child has a digestive system, liver, or nutritional problem, a *Pediatric Gastroenterologist* has the expertise to treat your child. Digestive, liver, and nutritional problems in children often are quite different from those seen in adults. Specialized training and experience in pediatric gastroenterology are important.

Pediatric gastroenterologists treat children from the newborn period through the teen years. They choose to make pediatric care the core of their medical practice, which provides extensive experience specifically in the care of infants, children, and teens.

What kind of training do pediatric gastroenterologists have?

Pediatric gastroenterologists are medical doctors who have had

- At least 4 years of medical school
- Three years of pediatric residency training
- Three years of additional training in pediatric gastroenterology, hepatology, and nutrition, including medical research and treatment of infants, children, and teens with digestive, liver, and nutritional disorders
- Certification in pediatrics from the American Board of Pediatrics, and in gastroenterology and nutrition from the American Board of Pediatrics Sub-board in Pediatric Gastroenterology

What types of treatments do pediatric gastroenterologists provide?

Pediatric gastroenterologists generally provide treatment for the following:

- Bleeding from the gastrointestinal tract
- Lactose intolerance
- Food allergies or intolerances
- Severe or complicated gastroesophageal reflux disease (reflux or GERD)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Short bowel syndrome
- Liver disease
- Acute or chronic abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Chronic constipation
- Chronic or severe diarrhea
- Pancreatic insufficiency (including cystic fibrosis) and pancreatitis
- Nutritional problems (including malnutrition, failure to thrive, and obesity)
- Feeding disorders

Pediatric gastroenterologists are specially trained to perform diagnostic tests of a child's digestive system. Special instruments, such as endoscopes, are used to examine the inside of the digestive tract or obtain tissue samples (biopsies). Endoscopic procedures pediatric gastroenterologists perform include esophagogastroduodenoscopy and colonoscopy. Pediatric gastroenterologists also treat bleeding, swallowing problems, or other problems encountered in the intestines. They have extensive expertise in managing nutritional problems in children, including placement and management of feeding tubes and intravenous nutrition and diagnosing and treating infants, children, and teens with liver disease.

Where can I find a pediatric gastroenterologist?

Pediatric gastroenterologists practice in a variety of medical settings including children's hospitals, university medical centers, and large community hospitals, as well as private offices or private practices.

Pediatric gastroenterologists — the best care for infants, children, and teens

Children are not just small adults. Their bodies are growing and have unique medical needs. They usually express their concerns differently than adults. They cannot always answer medical questions and are not always able to be patient and cooperative. Pediatric gastroenterologists know how to examine and treat children in a way that makes them relaxed and cooperative. Pediatric gastroenterologists focus on problems unique to pediatric patients, including growth, maturation, physical and emotional development, and age-related social issues. Most pediatric gastroenterologist offices are arranged and decorated with children in mind.

If your pediatrician suggests that your child see a pediatric gastroenterologist, you can be assured that your child will receive the best possible care.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

American Academy
of Pediatrics



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